

April  
2026

# The Samaritan

## Worship Themes

April 5 - Easter  
Sunday /  
Communion / "The  
Good News is...Alive in  
the World"

April 12 - Easter 2 /  
"Cherish Your Doubts"

April 19 - Easter 3 /  
"On the Road"

April 26 - Easter 4 /  
"Glad and Generous  
Hearts"



58<sup>th</sup> Annual

## Spring Ring

Sunday, April 26 | 4:00 p.m.

On April 26 at 4:00 p.m., the Good Samaritan handbell choirs will perform in the 58th annual Spring Ring concert. The concert showcases the musical talents of all four of the Good Samaritan handbell groups, with solos rung by each choir and massed songs with all groups ringing together. We welcome you to come hear the Chancel Chimes, the community group Ding Dong Dollies, Jubilee!, and the Razzlin' Dazzlers quartet performing together. During the concert, there will be a no-stress opportunity for audience ringing where you can give handbells a try. Following the concert, you are welcome to a \$5/person appetizer and dessert smorgasbord to dine and mingle with the ringers. We hope to see you there!

Graphic: Katie Hinz

## OUR STAFF

Rev. Max Richter  
Lead Pastor  
max@good.org  
952-452-9395

Rev. Jim Beard  
Dir. of Congregational Care  
jim@good.org  
952-452-9396

Jan Russell  
Director of Children, Youth  
and Family Ministries  
jan@good.org  
952-452-9398

Noemi Dooley  
Coordinator of Online  
Engagement  
noemi@good.org

Carey Shunskis  
Director of Music  
Ministries/Chancel Choir  
carey@good.org

Cynthia Betz  
Organist/Accompanist  
cynthia@good.org

Kate Graber  
Chancel Chimes Director  
kate@good.org

Christina Herold  
Jubilee! Bell Choir Director  
christina@good.org

Brad Carlin  
Homeward Bound Director  
bradleypcarlin@gmail.com

Serena Steffenhagen  
Small Groups/Faith Alive Director  
serena@good.org

Cindy Bergstrom  
Office Manager  
cindy@good.org  
952-952-0049

Kim Hill  
Bookkeeper  
kim@good.org  
952-452-9394

Dan Green  
Building Engineer  
danrg@good.org  
612-889-4015

Dandy Lewis  
Website Administrator  
dandy@good.org

# Pastor's Page

We begin April with the depth and promises of Holy Week from Palm/Passion Sunday through Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and into the promise of Easter Resurrection and new life. As we continue to live into the new Good Samaritan, reflecting the heritage of **both branches of our congregation's roots, we are in a season of rebirth as a new faith community with a commitment to serve our local community and world.**



One of the signs of this rebirth is the growth of our music ministries. As we program ensembles, each band will be leading us 12 times a year, although not always each month, depending on scheduling. For **example, Faith Alive will lead us twice in April. This Spring, we'll gather for the Spring Ring featuring all bell choirs on April 26 from 4-6 p.m., the Spring Social featuring Homeward Bound on May 1 from 7-9 p.m., and all our ensembles on Big Music Sunday, May 17, in worship. I'm grateful for Carey's willingness to take on more responsibilities as Director of Music Ministries with increased hours and responsibilities in her role. Our music team of Brad, Carey, Christina, Cynthia, Kate, and Serena is working hard to bring us high-quality music ministries along with our dedicated members of each ensemble.**

I also want to thank our administrative and program staff, Cindy, Kim, Dan, Jan, Jim, Noemi, and Dandy, for their additional work with the merger to organize, welcome, implement, and shape our work together. Many volunteers have been helping to do the same. We are so grateful for each of you as well. All of your efforts are signs of rebirth.

We continue to see increased attendance not only with the merger but with people who visit and return who are new to the congregation. As we completed our Conference statistical tables at the end of February, we noted that our worship attendance was up 8% in 2025, even before our Aldersgate family joined us on January 1.

**In this season of rebirth, let us give thanks for the way God's Spirit is moving among and within our midst to lead us into a new future together.**

Thanks to each of you for the many ways you support our ministry with your generosity of time, talent, financial resources, prayer, and passion to make Good Sam a great place to be!

Yours together in ministry,

*Pastor Max*

# Worship

## Holy Week at Good Samaritan



Sunday, March 29 | 10:00 a.m.

### **Palm/Passion service with Chancel Chimes**

From the palm processional to the beginning of Jesus' final journey toward the cross, we begin Holy Week together.



Thursday, April 2 | 7:00 p.m.

### **Maundy Thursday service with Holy Communion and Chancel Choir**

We remember Jesus' last night with his disciples around the table. Childcare provided.



Friday, April 3 | 7:00 p.m.

### **Joint Good Friday service**

We will join Lake Harriet and Church of Peace UMC (Richfield) for a joint Good Friday service featuring the Seven Last Words of Christ and a combined choir. Music and scripture will be woven together throughout this "lessons and carols" style service. Lake Harriet is hosting the service at 4901 Chowen Avenue South, Minneapolis.



Sunday, April 5 | 10:00 a.m.

### **Easter Festival Worship with Chancel Choir, Jubilee! Bell Choir, and Chancel Chimes**

Come celebrate the Resurrection with our annual traditions of the Easter Garden, the Hallelujah Chorus and a joyful service for all ages!

# Aldersgate History

*With the annual Spring Ring handbell concert (see cover) happening at Good Samaritan for the first time, we wanted to highlight the Aldersgate handbell groups playing at that event. Good Samaritan's Chancel Chimes will also be playing.*

## The Ding Dong Dollies by Christina Herold

During her extensive travels around the world, the first Handbell Director, Betty Fletcher, would bring home a folk outfit from the country or region she visited. After wondering what to do with her growing collection, she decided to create a new handbell choir called the Ding Dong Dollies in 1968. The Dollies wore the beautiful outfits and were well known in the early handbell community as a ringing and singing international doll collection playing music from around the world, all thanks to **Betty's talent for arranging playful folk medleys** for bells. Over time, the Dollies have changed from a church choir to a community choir sponsored by Good Samaritan, whose mission is to bring the joy of handbells to audiences who cannot attend a public concert. Many of the Dollies have been or are bell choir directors at their home church, and perform with other Twin City bell choirs. The Dollies perform in December and May for local senior residences and at the Star Studio in-house TV show at the Minnesota Children's Hospital. All Dollies concerts end with ringing and singing "Let There Be Peace on Earth."

Fun Facts: The Dollies have played in every Spring Ring since 1968. Barb Lohmann has been a Dollie since 1992.

*Handbells*



## The Jubilee! Bell Choir by Sheri Manning

The Jubilee! Choir started in 1999. The Aldersgate UMC Worship Committee hoped the bells could play more frequently in worship. Sandy Stoneking, already the director of three bell choirs, decided to provide an in-house adult fun choir (no stress) for Sunday services. The choir would welcome youth who wished to continue playing after high school graduation. The choir would also welcome adults who wished to learn to play bells or continue to play. The choir did not have to travel or perform outside the church, except for more recently performing in an occasional local festival. The Jubilee! name was suggested by Pastor David McBride's wife, ringer Robin.

Sandy's bulletin notice for a new bell choir said that members did not need prior bell ringing experience and did not need to know how to read music. I talked to Sandy, and she assured me that all I needed to know was to be able to count to 8, know the difference between a circle and a parenthesis, and know what red and blue colors were. Sandy used circles and parentheses and two colors to mark the music to help each ringer identify their notes, a practice Christina continues.

At the first rehearsal, Sandy showed us all how to hold a bell and ring it, and she wanted everyone to look at measure 5. I was the only ringer who didn't play, because I didn't remember what a "measure" was. I felt embarrassed, but I raised my hand and said that was not one of the things you told me I needed to know. She smiled and said, "You are correct." Over the years, Jubilee! has brought both ringers and listeners great joy and memories. We look forward to enjoying and sharing our music with our new Good Samaritan family.

*(cont'd)*

# Aldersgate History

Fun facts: Sheri Manning, Jan Nyberg, and Ann Wood have played in Jubilee! since it began. Jubilee! has played in every Spring Ring since 2000.

## **The Razzlin' Dazzlers**

by Grace Steffenhagen

The Razzlin' Dazzlers is a quartet bell choir established in 2022 at Aldersgate UMC by bell director Christina Herold. Members include Christina Herold, Katie Hinz, Grace Steffenhagen, and Kaitlyn Steffenhagen. Serena Steffenhagen occasionally accompanies the group on piano. Katie, Grace, and Kaitlyn grew up ringing together under Aldersgate bell choir director Sandy Stoneking. Christina rings while leading the quartet in challenging and exciting pieces, during which ringers can incorporate skills not often used in larger choirs. For example, many pieces require ringers to weave their bells.

Weaving allows a ringer to ring more than two bells in quick succession, creating a full and cohesive sound. The Dazzlers have performed at each Spring Ring since 2023, as well as periodic performances throughout the year at regular church services. The quartet's name came from a rapid-fire stream of consciousness brainstorming session, and while it is a mouthful, it encapsulates the ringers' dedication to razzle and dazzle as best they can.

Fun facts: Katie Hinz, Kaitlyn Steffenhagen, and Grace Steffenhagen have played in five bell choir groups. They played in the junior high choir, Holy Tollers, and the senior high Chapel Chimers choir as youth. As adults, they now play with Jubilee!, Ding Dong Dollie's, and Razzlin' Dazzlers. They can also play as a substitute, often with no notice, at any bell part. Keep a lookout for these gifted ringers playing in three bell groups during Spring Ring!



Spring Ring 2025  
photo by Katie Hinz

# Congregational Care



Pastor Jim Beard  
(he/him)  
Director of  
Congregational Care  
jim@good.org  
952-452-9396



Sanctuary Cross, 2023, photo by PJBeard

## Justice and Mercy; Grace and Love

*One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingdom." He replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise." - Luke 23:39-43 NRSVUE*

The man on the cross next to Jesus is often said to represent us. One theological way of thinking understands Christ's crucifixion in this way: we all deserve punishment and death because of our sinful deeds. The guilty get what they deserve. But Jesus steps in to free us from the punishment which should be ours by taking it on himself. This is justice. Justice is satisfied, and mercy is enacted instead, allowing us access to paradise with Jesus.

Another theological way of looking at this is through the eyes of grace. Jesus is on a cross

next to those who do not merit heaven on their own. But Jesus is there because of God's passion for all of humanity. Jesus suffers with us, dies with us, but then rises so that we might rise with him. God isn't demanding that justice be served; Jesus is demonstrating just how far God will go to give us eternal life. Once and for all, nothing can separate us from God's unconditional love. Paradise is available to all who simply reach out and ask.

And there are other ways to interpret what Jesus' death is doing for us. However you choose to make sense of it, don't do it half-heartedly. Don't skip over the actions of Good Friday in a race to get to Easter. The joy of the resurrection is much greater when the passion of Good Friday is deeply embraced.

*Thank you, Lord, for all you have done for us. Your extreme actions have changed me and the world for good. Let me never forget nor become merely a casual observer of what you have gone through. Break my heart this Holy Week so that my soul might burst with awe and praise this Easter. Amen.*

# Children, Youth and Family Ministries

## Sacred Parenthood: Settle

Our parenting book for 2026 is *Sacred Parenthood: Spiritual Practices for the Highs and Lows of Parenting* by Aizaiah G. Yong and Nereyda Yong.

In this book we will look at a contemplative parenting practice. It uses an acronym SACRED: Settle, Acknowledge, Curiosity, Restore, Enjoy, and Dance.

This month we'll start with *Settle*:

*Be still and know...* Psalm 46:10

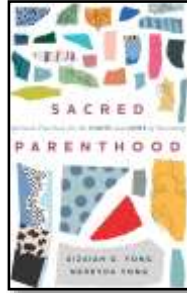
"We have bought the line that our lives are only worthy of care if they 'produce.' "

The true grace of God's expansive love is offered to us whether we feel we deserve it or not. Our grind-it-out culture does not lead to fulfillment. Many of our children are developing what psychologist Laren Cook called "hurried child syndrome." "We schedule them like mini-adults without building in time for their relaxation, play, and...even boredom."

Giving our children some stillness in their week allows them to find and connect with the Divine. The intent is to find something that brings comfort and connection amid struggle and stress. Small moments are fine...breath prayers, a moment in the drop-off line to offer each other hope and compassion.

There are some great suggestions on pages 57 to 59 in the book for other ways to practice settling. Let me know what you try and what works for your family.

I am praying for you and your family. - Jan



Jan M. Russell (she/her)

Director of Children, Youth & Family Ministries

jan@good.org  
952-452-9398

## Eggstravaganza!

On Easter Sunday, April 5, after the worship Children's Time, we will head to Aldersgate Hall to enjoy an Easter craft extravaganza!



## ASP Updates!

Our next Intergenerational Mission Trip is schedule for June 20-28. Our next gathering is Sunday, April 19, 6:30 p.m. in the Community Room for Culture and Sensitivity Training. The balance of registration is due that night.



## Vacation Bible Camp 2026 June 15-18



This program invites kids to an exciting winter sports event, where they become Challengers, gearing up for frosty games, snowy surprises, and hands-on lessons about resilience and faith.

# Music



## Homeward Bound to Host Third Annual Spring Social

Thanks to everyone who attended our first two Spring Socials with Homeward Bound in Fellowship Hall, now newly renamed to Aldersgate Hall! We had a sensational time last May, playing 22 songs that constituted a mixture of sacred songs from our 2024-25 season as well as some more secular material. We were also thrilled to be joined by three very special guests, longtime band alumni Heather Succio and Steve Kumagai, as well as Pastor Max Richter, who made his singing debut with the band on both a showtune, "Oh What a Beautiful Morning," and a punk rock version of a Johnny Cash classic, "Ring of Fire."

We are excited to announce that the third annual Spring Social will be held in Aldersgate Hall on Friday May 1 from 7:00-9:00 p.m. We again anticipate a varied program and a collection of special surprise guests! A wide variety of sweet and savory desserts will be on hand, as well as coffee, tea, and lemonade. As in past years, a free-will offering will be taken to support music efforts across the church. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend!

Scan the QR code or go to [tinyurl.com/GSSpringSocial2026](https://tinyurl.com/GSSpringSocial2026) to register to attend, to contribute desserts, or to volunteer to help in the kitchen.



We also anticipate a variety of outdoor summer concerts in 2026, to include our annual shows at the beautiful and prestigious Lake Harriet Bandshell and the Edina Centennial Lakes Amphitheater, the band's "home away from home". We really appreciate the support we receive from Good Sammers at all our summer shows! Please watch this space for future summer concert announcements, including specific dates and times.

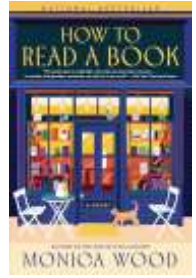
- Brad Carlin, Band Leader

Homeward Bound social media:  
Facebook: [facebook.com/HomewardBoundMusicians](https://facebook.com/HomewardBoundMusicians)  
Website: [homewardboundband.com](https://homewardboundband.com)  
YouTube: [youtube.com/HomewardBoundBand](https://youtube.com/HomewardBoundBand)

# News & Events

## Thursday Afternoon Book Group

Our next meeting will be Thursday, April 9, at 1:00 p.m. in the Fireside Room. The discussion title is *How To Read A Book* by Monica Wood, a chance encounter at a bookstore, exploring redemption, unlikely friendships, and the life-changing power of sharing stories. Please join us for fellowship, discussion, and refreshments. Contact Vicki Dunn with questions - victoria.dunn@myctl.net.



# The Good Samaritan Foundation

## Foundation Update

Happy Easter and Happy Spring from The Good Samaritan Foundation!

The mid-March balances of The Foundation were:

Outreach Fund	\$320,537
Cornerstone Fund	\$ 89,261
Evergreen Fund	<u>\$384,348</u>
Total	\$794,446



The next meeting of The Foundation is Thursday, May 21. If you have a suggestion for a grant from the Outreach Fund, please contact Claudia at claudiaLboysen@gmail.com. To apply for a grant on the good.org website at good.org/give/the-foundation.

Interested in serving on The Foundation Board? Contact Claudia for details.

# Finance Team

## Finance Update

February was a solid month for both income and expense. Details can be found in the table below.

In late February, we cashed in a Capital CD (\$40,000), earning over \$1,600 in interest. We used \$30,000 to pay down the mortgage principal and deposited the remainder (and interest) in the Capital account for future mortgage payments.

Thank you for your continued support of our church! - Byron Olson

	<b>Feb Actuals</b>	<b>Feb Plan</b>	<b>Year-to-Date Actuals</b>
<b>Income</b>	\$55,126	\$51,442	\$194,092
<b>Expense</b>	\$64,661	\$65,804	\$130,346
<b>Net</b>	(\$9,535)	(\$14,362)	\$63,747

# Missions & Reconciling

## What Have We Been Doing?



A huge thank you for responding to the call to support the families of students at Stonebridge World School.

With donations of \$24,770 to GoFundMe and directly to Good Samaritan, 18 families were kept safe with rent and food assistance.



FOOD SECURITY: Thank you to everyone who supported our drive for STEP (St Louis Park Emergency Program) during the March Minnesota FoodShare with food donations supporting their emergency food packs.



Feed My Starving Children – In the last two packing events, Good Samaritans joined with other volunteers to pack 253 boxes of food – that is 54,638 meals, enough to feed 160 children for a year!

Good Samaritan drivers delivered meals for Edina Meals on Wheels. Our City of St. Louis Park Ministry Fund gave \$5,000 for Dinner at Your Door (Meals on Wheels in St. Louis Park). The Fund also provided \$15,000 for STEP's programs as well.

HOUSING SECURITY: In March, two families establishing homes received five beds, bookcases, and other household goods from generous donations by Good Samaritans and others. Thanks to all and to Brian Boyson, Pat Deckas Beccera, JoAnn Knutson, and Dick Seitz for making the deliveries using our van and trailer.



Brian Boyson and Janet VanBenthuyzen joined the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless, which includes Beacon Interfaith Housing and other local housing organizations, for Homeless Day on the Hill on March 11. Over 200 advocates, workers, and people with lived experience of homelessness shared the importance of affordable and supportive housing to keep people in their homes. We had good meetings with legislators to explain why supportive housing works and share our stories. Even when legislators are in favor of these programs, they appreciate hearing directly from constituents about the impact and community support for the programs.

NEON (Wesley Foundation) has been growing. Linda Hammersten has been volunteering with this campus ministry at the University of Minnesota, and she has found it uplifting to witness life-changing events over the past year. Contact Linda if you would like to learn more or get involved - [lindahammersten@msn.com](mailto:lindahammersten@msn.com).



# Missions & Reconciling

## Coming Up in April

The annual Easter Offering provides a significant amount of the funds our Missions committee uses to assist programs in support of housing, food, and education. Please consider your offering prayerfully as we face so many challenges locally, nationally, and around our world.

Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaboration holds its monthly Zoom advocacy meeting on the first Wednesday of every month. Join them on April 1, 8:30-9:00 a.m. Register at [beaconinterfaith.org/event/rent-is-due-4-1-2026](https://beaconinterfaith.org/event/rent-is-due-4-1-2026).

Join the group at Feed My Starving Children for meal packing at the Chanhassen location on Wednesday, April 8, 9:30-11:15 a.m. and/or Friday, April 24, 7:15-8:45 p.m. Contact Jane Heimerl at [jane.heimerl@yahoo.com](mailto:jane.heimerl@yahoo.com) to sign up.

See the next column for Meals on Wheels information and contact Vicki Dunn at [victoria.dunn@myctl.net](mailto:victoria.dunn@myctl.net) to get involved. Our next delivery is on Friday, April 17, 10:45 a.m.

The Minnesota Reconciling Congregations (MRC) Spring Social will be on Saturday, April 18, 11:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. at Holy Trinity UMC in Prior Lake. [Our own Max Richter and David Litteken will be part of a panel discussion on “Welcoming LGBTQIA+ Clergy to Your Congregation” following a potluck lunch.](#) Watch for a sign-up to carpool to Prior Lake in the Narthex.

MRC is looking for new people for its leadership team. Would you like to find a way to be more involved? For more information, contact Brian Boysen at [bteambackup@earthlink.net](mailto:bteambackup@earthlink.net) or visit the reconciling website at [www.mnrcumc.org](http://www.mnrcumc.org).

## Food Security Highlight

How else do we help?  
Neighbors helping Neighbors

We often highlight our area food shelves, VEAP, STEP, and Joyce, but there are other ways we work to reduce food insecurity. Here are two programs we support on a local level.

The Bird Feeder - A food shelf for students by students.



The Bird Feeder program was established by students at St. Louis Park High School, and it operates within their Business and Management Operations class.

**“The nonprofit ... allows students to show their brilliance and empower them to run an organization that helps their immediate community and fellow students.”** It is a confidential service providing meals and other living essentials to fellow students and their families. We support Bird Feeder with funding and periodic food drives.

Meals on Wheels – providing meals and human connection.

Metro Meals on Wheels is the association of 27 Meals on Wheels programs in the Twin Cities metro area. The program works to ensure seniors and individuals with disabilities receive nutritious meals and the human connection they need to help them live independently. The cost of the meal delivery service for recipients is based on need.



We support Meals on Wheels with volunteer drivers and meal packing in Edina, and funding for St. Louis Park and Edina. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Fridays of each month, our drivers deliver hot and frozen meals to three to six homes on each of four or five routes.



Good Samaritan United Methodist Church  
5730 Grove Street  
Edina, MN 55436

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
TWIN CITIES, MN  
PERMIT NO. 2518

*Electronic Service Requested*



## OUR VISION

INSPIRING  
Joyful Faith

BUILDING  
a Loving  
Community

SERVING  
Neighbors Near  
and Far

## SUNDAYS

9:45-11:30 a.m.

Nursery - Infants - Age 3

10:00-11:00 a.m.

Worship - In-person and Online

### **Children's Sunday School**

Held during worship following Children's Time.

All are welcome!

4:30-6:00 p.m.

Youth Group - 1st & 3rd Sundays

## GOOD SAMARITAN OFFICE HOURS

Monday-Friday 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Phone (952) 929-0049